

Learning from the Early Notification Scheme – Out of Programme Experience to Enhance Risk Management Training for Future Maternity Leaders

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Objective

Families using maternity services and staff working in maternity care value safety above all. The NHS remains a safe healthcare system, but avoidable errors still occur. Designing and delivering safe and inclusive maternity care requires an understanding of system level NHS function. The national fellowship programme at NHS Resolution enables obstetricians, midwives and neonatologists to take a year out of practice to acquire this system level experience to become future leaders. Insights into national learning strategies including legal issues can be difficult to obtain during specialist training. Taking the next step to become a clinical leader in maternity requires surmounting new challenges for the clinician to take in terms of managing risk responsibilities, event investigation and learning from adverse outcomes. Exposure to high level risk management and a greater understanding of the national maternity risk sphere of work and collaborations is crucial in becoming a good maternity leader.

Method

The national fellowship programme for NHS Resolution provides opportunities for clinicians to join the Early Notification team in proactively investigating specific brain injuries at birth for the purposes of determining potential liability. There is a huge range of responsibilities and learning opportunities. Work includes in-depth clinical and multi-disciplinary reviewing of cases which fulfil Early Notification criteria for term babies with brain injuries[1]. The fellowship allows the clinician to develop close educational relationships with legal and clinical specialists not readily available outside of this programme. Significantly, the fellowship allows development of specific learning plans for trusts and regions which have encountered difficult outcomes for some of their families and also allowed for participation in national NHS England initiatives.



Aims of the Early Notification (EN) Scheme:

- Investigate potential eligibility for compensation and take proactive action to reduce legal costs and improve the experience for the family and affected staff;
- Share learning rapidly with the individual trust and the wider system in order to support safety improvement and prevent the same things happening again;
- Build on our Saying Sorry[2] and Being Fair[3] work to ensure the process to obtain compensation is not a barrier to openness, candour and learning;
- Preserve evidence to ensure we are able to respond to cases that a family may choose to bring at a later date; and
- Improve the process for obtaining compensation for families, meeting needs in real time where possible and trying to reduce the risk of claims increasing in value due to inflation or unmet needs (such as psychological support) translating into larger losses.

Results

The General Medical Council and the Royal Colleges determine that time out of training should “enhance clinical experience” [4], especially highlighting areas more difficult to access in training programmes. Understanding and working alongside different stakeholders in maternity has enabled all the current fellows to offer insights in their clinical and leadership work that would be difficult to find outside of this role. Fellowship experience can help ensure the clinician is “equipped to undertake leadership roles where the focus is on improving quality” as desired by the Government for future healthcare leaders [5] and working at a national level is a unique chance to contribute to improving outcomes [6]. Significant understanding of data extraction and analysis is learnt development themes of learning to take back to affected teams to improve future care. Other fellowship programmes from anaesthesia, surgery, care of older people and a Quality and Safety programme in Scotland resulted in creation of peer networks, increased academic output and “career changing benefits” from the fellowships.



Conclusion

Experience of the NHS at system level is essential for future maternity leaders and there should be consideration of this type of learning out of training for all trainees wishing to expand their experience. Clinical expertise, leadership and knowledge of maternity services are all improved through these opportunities, allowing fellows to take their knowledge with them back into clinical practice and improve care in their future posts.

References:

- [The second report: The evolution of the Early Notification Scheme - NHS Resolutionhttps://resolution.nhs.uk/resources/saying-sorry/](https://resolution.nhs.uk/resources/saying-sorry/)
- <https://resolution.nhs.uk/resources/being-fair/>
- <https://resolution.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Behavioural-insights-into-patient-motivation-to-make-a-claim-for-clinical-negligence.pdf>
- [Gold Guide - 9th Edition - Conference Of Postgraduate Medical Deans \(copmed.org.uk\)](https://copmed.org.uk/)
- <https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/developing-people-improving-care/>
- <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/making-case-quality-improvement>